

4-5 Hill Street (House)
Christiansted
St. Croix Island
Virgin Islands

HABS No. VI-35

HABS
VI,
1-CHRIS
10-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN DESCRIPTIVE AND HISTORICAL DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

4-5 HILL STREET

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Location: Christiansted, St. Croix, Virgin Islands

General Statement:

Architectural Interest: The house is in excellent condition. Of note are the symmetrical but unequally sized arched openings of the gallery, and the way in which the second floor is a combination of exterior masonry and wood-braced sheathed construction. The kitchen hearth is in good condition.

Condition of fabric: The structure is in good condition. All wood is well painted and there is no apparent sign of termite damage.

Exterior:

Orientation: The building is situated on the southeast side of Hill Street midway between Queen's Cross Street and Church Street. The main floor is reached up a long flight of stairs which lead directly from the street up to a terrace to the northeast of the building. The gallery on the northwest side of the building overlooking the street is directly off this terrace and it is from the gallery that the house is entered. To the rear of the south corner of the main building is the old kitchen connected to the house by a pantry. There are two yards, one to the rear and one to the southwest.

Foundation: The building is built upon the hillside bedrock. In the front, the walls of the building extend down an addition floor below the main one, thus forming a base on which the building sets. On the sides, this base conforms to the slope of the terrain. The condition to the northeast of the building is masked by the neighboring site.

Wall construction: The walls are primarily two stories of brick and rubble masonry stuccoed, but the corner thirds in the front and rear walls, second floor, are wood braced frame construction covered with clapboard. These wood sections are fitted in between the masonry center parts and on the northeast, the end wall; on the southwest end, the wood is extended across the end of the second floor. There are five arched openings to the gallery; the central arch (No. 3) is flanked by two pairs of arches of different widths, such that the first and the fifth arches are of similar size as are the second and fourth arches. The second floor rear and front has seven window openings, two in each of the wooden sections, and three in the center masonry section. The interior is divided by masonry walls on the first floor and on the second by wooden beaded beam and stud walls sheathed on one side. The other sections have two rooms each. In the southwest part, second floor, there are two baths, the stairwell and one room.

Openings:

Doors: In the rear wall of the gallery, there are openings to conform to the arches of the gallery, the central one being the main door of heavy two-ply shutters, panelled on the interior and with panelled jalousie doors. In the rear, there are two doors, also with shutters, and one with jalousie doors.

Windows: There are seven windows in the front and rear walls of the second floor and four on the northeast side wall of the second floor. Openings in the masonry are square cut on the second floor and slightly splayed in on the first floor; all have flat brick arches. Those openings in the wood walls are fitted in between the studs with cross beams used as heads and sills. Each window has shutters with one of the following: jalousies, glazed 8-light casements, a combination of glazed in the upper light and jalousie in the lower, and screens. The first floor is entirely jalousies with shutters. In the center rear of the second floor is a door window with panelled jalousies and a railing.

Roof: The roof over the main part of the house is hipped, galvanized and covered with corrugated metal over wood rafters. The kitchen wing has a wooden boxed shed roof of galvanized metal.

Eaves: The slight overhang of the eaves drain into modern metal gutters on all sides and lead to various cisterns on the southwest. There are two leaders, one to each corner on the southwest.

Chimneys: There is an old brick, round, vaulted chimney over the hearth in the old kitchen in the southwest wall.

Interior:

Floor Plan: On the first floor, there is one room to the northeast of the center door and two rooms to the southwest; the kitchen wing to the southeast of these latter rooms continues back two more rooms. The stairs are located towards the rear to the southwest of the central doorway.

In three runs, the stairs lead to the southwest third of the three-part floor plan on the second floor, which contains two bathrooms over the kitchen, a small hall, and a front room. The middle section contains two large rooms, front and back, and the northeast section has two rooms, front and back. There are two cisterns to the southwest of the building, one old, one new, with a third cistern believed to be under the gallery at the west corner.

Stairways: The exterior entrance stairway leads directly from the street to the gallery in runs of 12 and 2 steps. It is located at the north corner of the site with a flat topped masonry railing and brick and stone treads. The interior stairway is in three runs of 3, 4 and 9 wood treads with three turns and two intermediate landings. The well is enclosed on one side by wood sheathing; the other is the masonry interior wall that divides the first floor rooms.

Floors: The treads on the exterior stairs and the various sets of steps in the yard are a combination of stone and brick. The landings and terrace to the northeast are in brick. The gallery and old kitchen have 1-1/2' square stone tiles. A modern white 6" by 6" ceramic tile is used in the main rooms, first floor. Asphalt tile is used in the pantry and new kitchen. The second floor is entirely of wood floor boards 12" in width with the bathrooms having asphalt tile. A low basehead is on all wooden walls.

Wall & ceiling finish: The gallery and southwest rooms on the first floor have exposed bevelled beams with sheathing ceilings. The living room has sheathing beneath the beams. On the second floor, the rooms have combination flat and sloped ceilings conforming to the pitch of the roof. The horizontal part is covered by sheathing boards but the sloped section shows beaded rafters. The masonry walls on the first floor are plastered without any adornment. The second floor masonry walls are also plain with the wood appearing as when constructed, which includes painted beaded studs and braces with sheathing boards.

Doorways and doors: On the first floor, the interior is panelled jalousies, the door at the northeast end of the gallery is two open picket wings. A similar picket gates forms the street entrance to the southwest yard. The second floor doors are either single-wing, three-panel on one side or two-wing, two-panels on one side.

Trim: The exterior trim consists of the round arches of the gallery, with keystones over the five front openings, flat brick arches over all other masonry openings. The interior has beaded or beveled beams, low moulded baseboards, moulded door frames and a chair rail on the rear wall of the gallery. Also of note is the simple manner in which the windows in the wood walls are fitted between the beaded studs. A moulded wooden strip is at the level of the upper third on the wooden walls, with the hall between the stairwell and center room on the second floor having four panels of Chinese louvers.

Hardware: The openings are equipped with the usual wrought-iron fixtures--strap and H hinges--flat bolt locks, various hooks and circle pulls. The main door has a metal box lock.

Lighting: The house has electricity.

Other:

General setting: The house is situated on a high outcrop of rock above the street with the site rising towards the rear. A terrace is to the northeast of the house at the gallery level, the remainder of the rear yard is ten steps higher with the east corner of the site another five steps up. On the southeast of the building is a large yard on a lower level.

Enclosures: A rear wall encloses the back yard, a retaining wall separates the side yard, while a third wall encloses it. On the northeast side of the site, a wall and the neighboring building form a barrier.

Outbuildings: A cistern is to the immediate southwest of the building, and is built of brick with a vaulted top. The gate to the side yard in the front wall leads between the cistern and the building with a flight of four steps. A second, more recent, concrete cistern to the southwest of the kitchen wing and a third one is believed to be under the west corner of the gallery. The old kitchen wing has two rooms, a pantry and the original cooking room equipped with a large hearth across one wall with oven and two "burners." The ceiling of these two rooms is brick on purlin on beams. A small shed is attached to the rear of the kitchen.

Walks: There is an elaborate system of walks and steps of brick throughout the rear yard. A path crosses the southwest yard to the old privy in the south corner.

Landscaping: The rear yard is well planted with an assortment of trees, flowering shrubs and flowers. The southwest yard contains some large trees.

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